
SRV MATTERS - 6

What might SRV say about ... 'Slow'

This is the first in a series of an SRV Matters theme, 'What might SRV say about?'

Some of you will know or know of Mr Peter Millier of Adelaide, Australia's first SRV Senior Trainer. Peter would gently admonish us to never say 'SRV says' but rather 'How might SRV help us understand this'. With this in mind, please enjoy his article, 'What might SRV say about ... Slow?'

We live in a world that values physical and mental quickness and agility. People who do not think, act or move quickly tend to be devalued. Have you ever stood in a '12 items or less' queue at your local supermarket where an elderly person is struggling with EFTPOS, or at a similar scenario at an ATM? Typically we will roll our eyes and mentally urge the elderly person to hurry up and go away, or perhaps hope someone else will assist them. We are in a hurry and cannot be bothered. We do not value 'slow' – we do not value perceived incompetence.

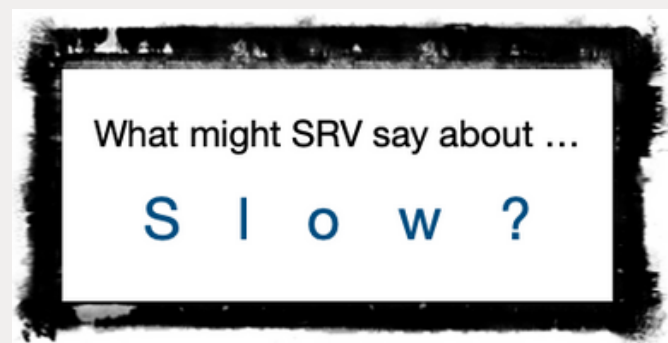
Whereas formerly, elderly people were valued for the longevity of their lives and the wisdom they accumulated along the way, now they are more likely to be perceived as a burden (to family and society), sick, dying or better off dead. A common assumption is that elderly people can no longer learn or develop new skills. Of course they will have many of the skills learned over a lifetime but these are seldom taken into account or utilised. The focus of many helping forms is usually on deficits rather than assets or abilities.

A starting point suggested by SRV is to get to know who the person really is, what have been his/her life experiences, what are the valued roles he/she has held over a lifetime, how have these shaped the identity of the person, what are the assumptions held about the person by his/her family, community and society.

Then one needs to envisage – together with the person – possible valued roles s/he might continue to perform or learn which fit their life experiences and identity. For instance, an elderly person might be physically slow but mentally very alert and might have a role of teaching a younger person to read or write; or perform household repairs, do woodwork or welding. It will depend entirely on the person, on his/her skills and capacities.

Most elderly people, when asked what they would like to do, say they would appreciate opportunities to contribute to family, community and society. An approach based on SRV will look to harness these hopes and desires in a positive way rather than confirm to community stereotypes that they are past their 'use-by' date.

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SRV Ideas: Improved SRV application
